

Staff Spotlight: Office Recycling Committee

In addition to working for the Department of Environmental Quality's Water Bureau, Mary Fales and Brandie Jacob Stefanski have taken time out of their busy schedules at the Grand Rapids district office to implement projects for an office recycling committee.

The committee was created by Brandie and Mary, with help from Laura Rauwerda from the district's Environmental Science and Services Division. The recycling committee was formed in April and has since hosted an innovative project each month to protect the community's environment and valuable resources.

"Many of us recycle at home and we thought it was important that staff be able to recycle at work as well," said Mary. "Especially working for the Department of Environmental Quality, we thought it was the right thing to do to promote an activity as environmentally friendly as recycling,"

One of their recent projects involved gathering DEQ staff to plant flowers in front of the new district office building. The project was completed on Earth Day, and staff is now seeing the fruits of their efforts as the flowers are beginning to bloom.

Another project hosted by the group, was a staff bake sale to raise money for new office recycling bins. Now, the bins allow DEQ employees to bring in their cardboard, plastics, glass, aluminum, computer discs, cell phones and batteries for recycling. Mary and Brandie regularly take the bins to their neighborhood's curb-side recycling programs so these items are not wasted.

"When people see members of the recycling committee taking the time to collect and transport recyclables, I think it reminds them that recycling is important," said Brandie.

In June, the recycling committee worked with Dale DeKraker from the district's Waste and Hazardous Material Division to host a hazardous household waste pickup day at the Grand Rapids DEQ staff office. Household hazardous waste consists of batteries, oils, and other items that should not be disposed at a landfill or garbage disposal.

During the day, fourteen DEQ staff members brought in 88 containers of various hazardous household waste. Brandie, Mary, and Dale sorted and transported the waste to the Kent County Hazardous Waste Center and coordinated with Resource Recovery Specialist Kathy Babins to ensure that it was properly disposed.



Bake Sale (Click on photo to enlarge)



After the household waste project, Dale decided to join the recycling committee for future endeavors.

“Mary and Brandie had questions on how to manage a collection event so I wanted to help. I have been involved in many household collections in our district so I was more than happy to lend them my expertise,” Dale said. After the event, I decided to join the committee to see if I could be of further assistance in the future.”

The recycle committee plans to continue hosting creative projects each month that help with recycling, clean air, and clean water in their community. One idea for a future project includes a canoe and watershed clean-up trip.

Water Bureau Planting [Powerpoint Presentation](#)

Hazardous Household Waste Recycling [Powerpoint Presentation](#)